## THE KANSAS IDEAL.

IS IT EMBODIED IN MR. WHITE'S TYPI-CAL TOWN, OR IS IT YET TO BE WORKED OUT?

It is a good thing to know people as they are if we have to discuss problems with them. Misconception of motives and habits of life is more fatal to harmonious solution than any difference of interests or divergence of aims. The passions aroused in the last campaign, so far as they were honest, popular passions, and simple, democratic society and good morals not the simulations of the demagogue used for dramatic effect upon others, sprang on both sides less from earnest conviction-though there was doubtless a depth of earnestness in each party-than from suspicion based on ignorance of the conditions of the peoples who were the typical believers in the different doctrines. The Westerner really was deluded into the belief that the Easterner wanted to oppress him in mere selfishness, and could not realize the complex life which saw in his notions a menace not simply to its selfish interests, but to its laboriously developed civilization. So the Eastern man, knowing the West largely from its most erratic and violent spokesmen, found it difficult to believe in the good sense or good faith of communities which accepted such teachers. No part of the West has suffered so much in this respect as Kansas. Therefore, it is a matter of peculiar interest that so keen an observer of its life and so straightforward a critic of its tendencies as Mr. William Allen White should have written of "A Typical Kansas Community," for the current number of "The Atlantic Monthly."

If Matthew Arnold were now writing "A Word About America" he would certainly study Mr. White's description to see if it would aid him in finding that "manner of life belonging to the highest civilization" which his Boston critic assured him existed in towns never heard of by Mr. Arnold. The political aspect of Kansas is entirely aside from Mr. White's purpose. It is suggested only by the fact that political misunderstanding has made emphatic the need of social insight. His aim has been to reveal the workings of the Kansas town, the social ideal of its people and their industrial state so far as it conditions the family and village life. The present era in Kansas, he says, is one of homemaking. The gambler has gone. The day of gaining fortunes by passing lands from one to another at fictitious values is gone. The speculator finds his market unresponsive. The people now in the State are no longer camping; they intend to remain, and accordingly are making homes and setting social boundaries.

A State in which the largest town has hardly forty thousand inhabitants, dotted with county seats which are in the strictest sense country towns, drawing their sustenance from the farming community round about, and having no factories and no labor problem, can scarcely be called cosmopolitan, though all the nations of the earth be represented there. Existence in Kansas is essentially simple, not to say primitive. The appliances of civilization may all be there. Books, papers, railroads and electricity may be at everybody's hand, but these are only tools and do not mean either finish or complexity in the social fabric. Mr. White thus describes the outward aspect of his typical town:

"The highways are as straight as the surveyor's chain could make them. Set back at regular distances from the sidewalk are the more pretentious residences, built in the obtrusive architectural style of the 'boom' days, complacent in their sham magnificence. The paint has been washed off many of them, and their faded appearance is almost tragic. The story of these unpainted houses is written upon the town, and in the leafless season it depresses the passing stranger; but in the early spring, when the grass comes, nature covers up the barren aspect. The smaller houses of the village are less depressing. Perhaps they do not cover such bitter disappointments. They are like modest cottages the world over."

There is in these towns an intense social democracy, such as Mr. White thinks does not exist in older American States, though his account with minor variations might fit many small towns even in New-York. Class lines are indistinct. There are upper and lower crusts, but there is no "dead line." Society is graded something after this fashion: "The 'old whist crowd,' the 'young whist crowd,' the 'literary crowd,' the 'young dancing crowd,' the 'church social crowd,' or 'lodge crowd,' and the 'surprise party crowd." Those terms define themselves and the social and intellectual status of those they include pretty clearly. The family does not belong to a 'crowd' as a unit. One daughter attends the lodge socials and joins in spelling matches. Another bores herself listening to the pretentious learning of the Browning Circle. A son crosses the railroad track to a noisy dance on a kitchen floor, while the parents attend the meetings of the Bon Ton Whist Club and play for gilt-edged copies of "Ben Hur" and "hand-painted" smoking sets. The old style camp-meetings and revivals hold sway with the people who live in the side streets, and are regarded with indulgent superiority by the members of more fashionable churches.

Tenement-houses are unknown in Kansas Wages are not high, but opportunities for saving are many. The banker is generally a retired farmer, or storekeeper, or successful real estate importance. The former is put in office to help him pay his debts, and the latter to pay everybody's debt to him. The community is highly moral. In spite of all the fun about women in politics, Mr. White declares their influence good. They take little part in other than local questions, their office-holding has generally been a joke; but their silent influence has been uplifting. "In most towns in other States," writes Mr. White, "the corners of the principal streets are occupied by dramshops. In the town where this paper is written the influence of women four corners where the two main streets cross are occupied by banks. Instead of Hogan's retreat on the fourth corner stands a bookstore. There the boys and the young men of the town find a meeting place. . . It is a town of eight thousand inhabitants, without a saloon, without a strange woman, without a town drunkard."

These towns have libraries, and the politician do not cut down their allowance. E. P. Roe is still the favorite author. The worst theatrical companies possible and "terrible" concerts are the joy of the people. "When Kansas goes to the theatre," declares Mr. White, "it drops back into the dark ages." Nevertheless, he says: "In every Kansas town there is a group of men and women who read the best books, and who go regularly to Chicago or St. Louis every year to hear the best music."

Such in brief is the Kansas town of Mr. White's description. How exactly does that "group of people who read the best books" correspond to the "group of people of good taste, good manners, good education, and of self-respect," who were "interested in worldwide themes" and met each other with that "mutual courtesy and that self-respect which belong to men and women who are sure of their footing." tales of whom so stimulated Mr. Arnold's in-

The same question which met Mr. Arnold must meet anybody who attempts to judge the character and influence of this Kansas civilizadon. How numerous is this body and how popular are its aims. It is difficult for any man to judge who relies for information on the prevailing Kansas habit of abusing everything that an Eastern or a European gentleman would call good manners in society, cultivated standards in literature or conservatism in politics.

We have had crudity held up to us so persistently as a standard that we are inclined to consider these readers of the best books and interpreters of the best music as lonesome exiles in Kansas, and perhaps most unjustly. They probably form a small ard influential part of the community there as elsewhere, though to judge from Mr. White's description their surroundings are de-

pressing and narrowing. But more important than the question of the number of the enlightened is that of the openness of the rank and file to influence. White's town of pretentiously shabby houses, exhibits exactly what Mr. Arnold called 'middle-class virtues," meaning by that term no opprobrium, but using it merely to describe a one-sided existence which he thought characteristic of the English middle class and of the great body of Americans. These Kansas people have conduct, which is, after all, the greatest thing in life; they have equality; they have simplicity; they have mobility. Those are great advantages if they are accepted for what they are worth and made the groundwork for subsequently rounded life. But such a society is lacking in distinction and real sense of beauty. It is not interesting. It has not solved the human problem. Not that it is to blame for that or that it is peculiar in that imperfection. It is the characteristic of all narrow society isolated from the great world. And the complex organization of that great world likewise has its de-What is wanted is an understanding by each of its own defects and a striving for the other's excellencies. How much better London or Paris or New-York would be if their conventions merely conserved virtues and never protected vices. On the other hand, how much more worth living would life be in Kansas if rudeness were not glorified as self-respect and the shortcomings incident to new settlements pointed to as the fine flower of American civilization. Society in the isolated small town everywhere is unable to conceive of conditions differing from those with which it is familiar. great world to it is always wrong, hollow, insincere, decadent. That spirit prevails in the New-England village as well as in the Kansas town. Aside from the differences due to newer physical surroundings and the fact that the Kansas towns are seats of local government and not mere hamlets with none but farming interests, the spirit appears to be the same East and West,

Mr. White has no antagonism to the older civilization himself, and does not hint that the Kansas people have, yet the attitude of those who in recent years have spoken for them makes any estimate of the quality of Kansas civilization hinge on the question whether this ociety he tells of is a means or an end in the view of those who form it. It is all very good in its way. It may be accepted for what it is worth, and it is worth a great deal, but it has limitations. If the Kansas people are to hold it up as a standard and ideal of what American should be, if they are to deny the need of the things which the cultivated European or Easterner feels the want of, if they are going to assert that it is not crude and narrow, and that it does not need contact with older civilization, they will simply prove to the world that they have not yet begun to solve the human problem, for that beginning requires open-mindedness, self-examination, toleration, a sense of the many-sidedness of civilized life. If, on the other hand, they really accept their simple order and morality, their schools "which are not the best possible," their dark age theatres and their E. P. Roe tastes as the starting point for better things, they will have the regard of all

overs of progress. They are sensitive doubtless. The older comnunities perhaps seem supercilious and condescending. They surely need not be, for they have problems enough of their own. And yet Kansas must not wonder if its civilization is misunderstood. It has been the typical centre of agitation against conservative standards. Its orators have spread the notion that Kansas did not 'care for abroad," that it considered it unpatriotic to copy European act or politeness, that its ideal for America was an overgrown farmhouse family scornful of the manners and the wisdom of the great world. It is, of course, unjust to assume that this is the feeling of Mr. White's typical town or that his people who read the best books and go to Chicago each year are not its honored leaders. But this unjust asgood faith, and that lack of sympathy between East and West which many think forbodes ill would be less menacing if we were not constantly 'told that the old standards had been superseded, that our complex civilization must be overthrown and that "hired men" with their ideas of finance, of society, of books and of pictures must dominate the land. The East may lack understanding and be irritatingly complacent, as Mr. Lowell thought Europeans were, but it certainly does not pretend that the machinery of its social and industrial life is suited to the simpler and newer conditions of the West. R. C. E. B.

COULD NOT FURNISH BAIL.

THE PRISONER HELD ON A CHARGE OF OBTAIN-

ING GOODS ON FALSE REPRESENTATIONS. Marcus Holm, upon an order signed by Justice O'Dwyer, in the City Court, was arrested and locked up in Ludlow Street Jail yesterday in default of \$300 ball, upon an application made by Aaron Adler, a cloak manufacturer, of No. 128 Canal-st., who alleges that Holm owes him \$141 90 for goods obtained by false representations. Adler alleges that Holm told him that he had opened a store at No. 39 Mercer-st., and had a stock we free of all debts, \$2,000. Adler says he discovered that Holm had on similar representations obtained goods from other cloak manufacturers, and had at once shipped them off to other towns. Holm, Adonce shipped them of to didner towns. Holm, Ad-ler says, appeared to be only acting as manager of the store, which is in the name of Anna C. Holm. H. Chappelle & Co., J. Zimmerman & Co. and Peyser & Ladwiski are among other firms said to have been swindled.

WOOD ALCOHOL CAUSED DEATH. Mrs. Ida L. Lehwees, thirty years old, who lived in apartments at the Hotel Lafayette, at No. 23 Washington Place, was found dead in bed by her husband at 6 o'clock yesterday morning, according station Sergeant Albertson said that the young woman had been a drinker and that drinking was he cause of her death. He knew nothing about the antecedents of the woman, and only a few meagre details concerning her death. The Sergeant said that, according to the story told to the officer who been on a spree for some time, and that on Tues-day, in her eagerness to get a drink, she had drunk a quantity of wood alcohol. It is believed that the death of the young woman is the result of the draught of wood alcohol. There was no hint that the woman had attempted to take her Me, but that she took the alcohol, not knowing it to be poisonous.

# DROWNED WHILE IN A FIT.

Lawrence Glynn, a driver, twenty-five years old, of No. 677 East One-hundred-and-fifty-sixth st., was standing on the stringpiece of a pler west of the Third-ave, bridge on the north shore of the Har Third-ave, bridge on the north shore of the Har-lem River yesterday afternoon when he was at-tacked with an epileptic fit. With a shrick he threw up his hands, clutched wildly at the air and fell into the river. He did not come up. Grapplers recovered the body.

W. A. BELLWOOD HELD FOR TRIAL. William A. Bellwood, the dealer in bric-4-brac, of Philadelphia, who was arrested on July 18 at the Paga Hotel on request of W. E. Marcus, of the jeweiry firm of Marcus & Co., was held for trial in Centre Street Court yesterday.

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